

Prof Norton

THE
SCRIPTURAL INTERPRETER.

VOL. V.—NO. III.

CONTENTS.

TRANSLATION AND EXPOSITION — MATT. XV. 1 — 20,	97
TRANSLATION AND EXPOSITION — MATT. XV. 21 — 28,	101
TRADITION OF THE ELDERS,	103
THE APOCRYPHA,	107
THE FIRST COUNCIL OF THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH,	118
THE VARIOUS READINGS IN THE ORIGINAL TEXT OF THE NEW TESTAMENT,	130

BOSTON:
PUBLISHED BY LEONARD C. BOWLES,
No. 147, Washington Street.

CHARLES S. FRANCIS, NEW YORK — W. R. LUCAS, BALTIMORE.

CHARLES FOX, 67 PATERNOSTER ROW, LONDON.

1835.

NOTICE.

ACCORDING to the notice given in the last number of of the Interpreter, the Rev. Mr Gannett has consigned the management of this work to three of the members of the Theological School in Cambridge. In assuming this responsibility, we need only inform our readers that the plan of the work remains the same, and that we shall use our best exertions to maintain its character simply as an Interpreter without any regard to controversy or doctrine.

The general contents of the work will, as heretofore, embrace the following subjects.

Translations and Expositions of the New Testament Scriptures — with Practical Remarks on their purpose and spirit.

Explanations of obscure passages, relating to Jewish customs, ceremonies, institutions and doctrines.

Notes upon the Epistles, with general observations upon their design and contents.

Brief Dissertations upon the books of the Old Testament, with running commentaries and Explanations.

Extracts from valuable works on Biblical Criticism. The name of the writers will accompany each article.

☞ The three remaining numbers of this volume will be published upon the first day of October, November, and December.

TRANSLATION AND EXPOSITION.

MATTHEW XV. 1—20.

Traditions of the Elders.

- 1 Then came to Jesus, the Scribes and the Phari-
2 sees from Jerusalem, saying, why do thy disciples
transgress the tradition of the elders; for they do
3 not wash their hands when they eat bread? And
he answered, and said to them, why do you like-
wise transgress the commandment of God, by your
4 tradition? For God commanded saying, "Hon-
or thy father and mother, and let him who curses
5 father or mother be put to death." But you
say, "If any one shall say to his father or mother,
that by which thou mightest have been profited
6 by me is a gift, he may not even honor his father
or his mother." And so you have annulled the
commandment, of God by your tradition.
- 7 You hypocrites, well did Isaiah speak of you,
8 saying, "This people honor me with their lips,
9 but their heart is far from me; but in vain do they
worship me teaching the commandments of men.
- 10 And calling the multitude to him he said unto
11 them, Hear and understand; not that which goes
into the mouth defiles the man, but what comes
out of the mouth defiles the man.
- 12 Then his disciples came and said to him, dost
thou know that the Pharisees were offended when
13 they heard that remark? And he answered and

said to them, every plant which my heavenly
14 Father has not planted, shall be rooted up. Let
them alone, they are the blind guides of blind men
and if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into
the ditch.

15 Then Peter answered and said unto him, Ex-
16 plain to us this parable. And Jesus said, are you
17 also still without understanding? Do you not
yet understand that everything which enters the
mouth goes into the belly, and is cast into the
18 draught? But those things that come out of the
mouth, proceed from the heart, and they defile
19 the man. For out of the heart proceed evil
thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornication, theft,
20 false witness, blasphemy. These defile the man ;
but to eat with unwashed hands does not defile
the man.

EXPLANATORY NOTES.

Compare Mark vii. 1—22.

V. 1. Our Lord was now in Gennesaret, a small district of Galilee, adjacent to the Sea of Tiberias. See Matt. xiv. 34.

V. 2. *Tradition of the Elders.* Might be translated *doctrine* &c. See the second following article.

They wash not &c. The Pharisees laid great stress upon washing before and after meat. They taught that an evil spirit, called *Shibta*, sat on the food of him who eat without washing his hands, and made it injurious to him.

V. 3. The Pharisees had only accused Christ of violating the tradition of the Elders, he now proves that they transgressed the commandments of God, the written Law.

V. 4. *Honor thy father and mother.* Exodus xx. 12;

Lev. xix. 3. The word here rendered *honor*, had a wider meaning, and the command implies that *care* and *protection* should be rendered to parents, as well as respect and obedience. In short, it requires all filial duty.

V. 5. *It is a gift*, i. e. is consecrated to God. God has given an explicit command to honor our parents, the Pharisees transgressed it by their tradition. If a son had the means of supporting a destitute parent he might, if he pleased, devote his property to God, or place it in the hands of the Priests, and thus deprive his parents of what the Law of God made theirs. Such a gift was called *corban*. Mark vii. 11, 12. Christ showed the impiety and injustice of these laws, which *nominally* left the commandment of God, in full force and *virtually* abrogated it. Since the son was no longer obliged to honor his father or mother. *He shall be free* is inserted in the common version to supply the ellipsis, but Rosenmuller and other eminent critics adopt the translation we have given.

V. 6. Compare with 2d.

V. 7. *Isaiah*. Esaias is the Greek, as Isaiah is the Hebrew name of the Prophet.

V. 8. The common version reads, *draweth nigh unto me with their mouth*, an interpretation which is not found in the best manuscripts. See Isa. xxix. 13. Christ does not say that the Prophet applied these words to the Pharisees, but that they are applicable to them.

V. 9. Our worship is vain, when we break God's commands, to follow the opinions of men.

V. 10. The foregoing had been addressed to the Scribes &c.

V. 11. *Not that which enters the mouth*. The Pharisees thought some things were *naturally* so base that they defiled the soul. Jesus denies this, showing the superior importance of attending to what comes out of the mouth than to what enters it.

V. 13. *Every plant*. Some render it *every plantation*, and suppose it to refer to the Scribes and Pharisees, who had usurped an undue rank, and that they were *rooted up* when Jerusalem was destroyed. Others translate it, a *plant*,

referring to the unjust doctrines of Scribes, &c. which Christianity was to extirpate.

V. 14. *Let them alone.* Leave them, have nothing to do with their doctrine.

Blind guides. An apt illustration of the character of ignorant and perverse teachers. Peter perhaps, not aware that the authority of the Mosaic Law was to cease, thought the words of Christ were to be understood figuratively, when he denied that food could defile the soul.—*Rosenmuller.*

V. 19. *For out of the heart &c.* Christ taught two doctrines in opposition to the Pharisees, in this chapter; first, that external things do not defile the soul, and second, that evil thoughts coming from the heart alone defiled the man.

PRACTICAL REMARKS.

We see the extreme superstition, envy and incurable ill-nature of the Jews; forgetful of the spirituality of God's law, they adhere blindly to forms and ceremonies. How often do we prefer our own traditions to the precepts of God! Pride and envy blind the hearts of men, and cause them often to act the most wicked and the most ridiculous parts.

Human doctrines shall have their rise and fall; but the word of God remains steadfast.

We wonder at the apparent dulness of the apostles in not comprehending the whole force of the remarks of Christ. Yet we may receive a useful lesson from their anxious desire to learn their true meaning. Do we imitate their docility and eagerness to learn the truth of God?—*Clarke.*

T. PARKER.

TRANSLATION AND EXPOSITION.

MATTHEW XV. 21—28.

The Canaanitish Woman.

21 And Jesus departing thence, went up towards
22 the borders of Tyre and Sidon. And behold a
Canaanitish woman coming from those regions,
cried out to him, saying, Have mercy on me, oh
Lord, son of David, my daughter is badly afflicted
23 with a demon. But he answered her not a word.
Then his disciples came and entreated him saying,
24 Satisfy her, for she is crying after us. Then he
answered and said, I am not sent except to the
25 lost sheep of the House of Israel. And she came
26 and worshipped him, saying, Lord, help me. But
he answered and said, It is not right to take the
children's bread, and cast it to the dogs. And
27 she said, True, Lord, and yet the dogs eat of the
28 crumbs that fall from their master's table. Then
Jesus answered and said unto her, Oh woman,
great is thy faith. Be it to thee as thou wishest.
And her daughter was healed in that very hour.

EXPLANATORY NOTES.

Vs. 21. *Went up towards the borders, &c.* Christ probably departed from Gennesaret, where he had been teaching, to avoid the importunity of the Scribes and Pharisees. It does not appear that he ever left the land of Judea, as the common version implies. Tyre and Sidon are often

mentioned together, as these two cities were only about two miles apart.

V. 22. *A Canaanitish woman.* Mark (vii. 11,) calls her a *Greek*, a *Syrophœnician*. The Jews frequently called all *Greeks* who were not of their own nation. Mark calls her a *Syro Phœnician*, that is, a *Phœnician* of *Syria*, to distinguish her from the *Phœnicians* of *Africa*.

Son of David. She could easily have learned the descent of *Jesus*, from the multitude, "who heard him gladly;" and knowing the previous miraculous cures he had effected, she requested his assistance for her daughter.

Is badly afflicted with a demon. It is well known that the Jews ascribed to the agency of evil demons, all diseases which could not be healed. Those demons were supposed to be the disembodied spirits of evil men. They did not suppose *Satan* was the cause of such afflictions, but a different class of evil spirits, viz. demons.

V. 23. *Satisfy her.* Our version makes it appear that the disciples were troubled by her crying out, and wished to avoid her, and so requested *Jesus* to send her away. They however entreated him to satisfy her wants.

V. 24. *I am not sent.* Christ's object was not to do wonders among the *Gentiles*, but among the *Jews*. He was a *messenger* to them, though when he was ascended up to the right hand of the majesty on high, his gospel was to be preached to every creature.

Lost sheep, &c. Figures from pastoral life were always favorites among the *Jews*. Well may the sheep be called *lost*, when such men as the *Pharisees* were their keepers.

V. 25. *Worshipped him.* Perhaps bent down in a suppliant attitude, for this is the meaning of the word.

V. 26. *It is not right, &c.* Christ declares he was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of *Israel*, i. e., his particular ministry was to them. The *Jews* called themselves "children of *God*," and all other nations dogs. Christ uses the term rather as a common one, than as a mark of disrespect.

V. 27. The reply of the woman is equivalent to saying, "I do not wish to deprive the children of what is theirs,

but to receive what can well be spared. Fragments are everywhere given to the dogs.

V. 28. *Great is thy faith.* Which these obstacles could not overcome.

PRACTICAL REMARKS.

The case of the Canaanitish woman, is itself a thousand sermons. Her faith, her prayers, her perseverance, her success, the honor she received from the Lord, &c. How instructively, how powerfully do all these speak and plead! *They that seek shall find*, is the great lesson inculcated in this short history.—*Adam Clarke.*

T. PARKER.

TRADITIONS OF THE ELDERS.

MATTHEW XV. 2.

Why do thy disciples transgress the traditions of the elders? &c.

Tradition among the Jews signifies the oral law. Moses received commands from God, at mount Sinai, which he recorded, composing the written law. But at the same time, say they, he received an interpretation which he did not commit to writing, but which he communicated orally to others, who committed it to memory. He first delivered it to Aaron, then to his sons Eliasas and Ithamar, and afterward to the seventytwo elders, who were six of the most eminent men from each tribe. These seventytwo, with Moses and Aaron, delivered

this tradition to the heads of the people, and subsequently to the whole congregation !

Moses also is said to have communicated it to Joshua, Joshua gave it to the elders who succeeded him, they transmitted it to the prophets, who gave it to each other, until it came to Jeremiah ; he gave it to Baruch the scribe, who imparted it to Ezra, by whom it was communicated to the men of the great synagogue, the last of whom was Simon the just. From Simon it passed down through the hands of eminent men, till it came to Rabbi Judah the holy, who lived in the second century after Christ. He committed the tradition to writing, forming what is now called the *mishna*, that is, *miscellanies*. This volume contains explanations of all the precepts of the law. Explanations which the Jews consider as binding as the precepts of the law itself. Joshua was perfectly instructed in the interpretation of the law, and he transmitted the explanations. Whatever Joshua received from Moses, was admitted without any argument or disagreement, but if there was any secondary law, which was to be known by implication from the general ones, the vote of the majority decided upon it. The written law according to the traditionarians, contains six hundred and thirteen precepts, and thirteen precepts were given Moses on mount Sinai, for the proper interpretation of them. They say there was no disagreement upon the meaning of any part of the law, or any traditionary institutions, until the time of the men of the great synagogue, viz. Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi, Daniel, Ezra, &c. to the number of one hundred and twenty, who were the leading men after the captivity, and who, as the prophets had done before them, inquired

into the meaning of the law and its interpretation. Simon the just, was the last of the great synagogue, and died about two hundred and ninetythree years before Christ. He was the first of the mesnic doctors.

The mishna as collected by Rabbi Judah, contains the great body of traditions, and its contents may be arranged under five heads.

I. Interpretations supposed to have been received from Moses, concerning which there are hints in the written law, or such as may be drawn by reasoning, from it, but which have never been contested. So that when once it is said concerning a thing of this nature, it is received from tradition, all question was at an end.

II. Determinations, called constitutions of Moses from mount Sinai, which have no text to support them, but which have never been disputed.

III. Opinions of the majority on controverted subjects, which are mostly matters of small importance.

IV. Decrees of prophets and wise men, in different ages, intended to be *hedges* and *fences* to the law.

V. Constitutions conformable and similar to human laws, in which the written is neither increased nor diminished.

Rabbi Judah quotes no author who lived before Simon the just. The conciseness of his style often renders his opinions obscure. A difficulty which his disciples soon found, and some of them made additions to it with a view to illustrate the mishna, and to answer such questions as were not satisfactorily elucidated by that work.

About the beginning of the sixth century, the traditions and opinions of the second race of interpreters had

become very numerous, and Rabbi Ashe made a collection of them, and thus compiled the Babylonish Talmud. In this he undertakes, 1. To explain the mishna. 2. To give his opinion upon every controverted case, the meaning of a text, &c. 3. To give the decrees and conclusions of the most eminent doctors, and, 4. To make mystical explanations of such things as agreed with the sense of the chapter to be illustrated. This work extends to twelve volumes folio. The Jerusalem Talmud is by no means so voluminous. There are many wild and beautiful stories scattered up and down this immense collection, surrounded by many indecencies and falsehoods.

Some of their remarks upon subjects connected with the fifteenth of Matthew, may be instructive.

“He that saith there are no Phylacteries, and in so saying transgresseth against the law, he is not guilty. But he that saith there are five Phylacteries, in so saying addeth to the words of the scribes, he is guilty.” — *Lightfoot.*

“A man vows perhaps in a fit of anger, that his parent shall never receive any advantage from him. His vow binds him even if he subsequently repents. Here the impious rage of a disobedient child, is allowed to contradict the decalogue.

“The written law is narrow, but the traditional is longer than the earth and broader than the sea.”

Men were allowed to eat *dry fruits* with hands unwashed. To eat *bread* in this manner was pollution. The washing of their hands was effected by pouring water upon them. If the pollution was considered very great, two ablutions were necessary.

The disciples of Chanmai say, men ought to lie down

in the evening when they read, since it is said, *when thou liest down and when thou risest up*. The followers of Hillel say, every man may read as he pleases, because it is said, *when thou walkest by the way*. T. PARKER.

THE APOCRYPHA.

In some editions of the English Bible, there is found inserted between the Old and the New Testaments, a collection of writings called the Apocrypha. We propose to give some account of the character, authority, uses, &c. of these books.

1. Concerning the *name* it may be remarked, that the original meaning of an apocryphal writing (derived from the Greek,) was a book "obscurely written." And in this sense the primitive church applied it to such books as were thought to be beyond the understanding of men in general, and consequently forbidden them to read; though for that very reason Christian teachers were required to read and understand them. The title was also given to mere "forgeries." But the latter, and now general signification distinguishes it from canonical; and since this latter term is received by most Christians as synonymous with *inspired*, an apocryphal has come to mean nearly the same as an "uninspired" writing. We need not now stop to question the justness of the distinction of terms here made, as this were to enter upon the subject of inspiration, with which this is closely connected. What other distinctions exist between the apocryphal and canonical books, may perhaps be seen if we look at the

2. *Time and circumstances* in which the former were

composed. It was very natural that after a seventy years' captivity in a foreign land, differing in so many respects from their own, even so peculiar a nation as the Jews, should have been wrought upon by many changes. Although *as a people*, they may have kept themselves still distinct from surrounding idolatry, and from any open and deliberate share in the corruptions of their conquerors, it can hardly be doubted that much imperceptible influence came from their frequent intercourse — showing itself, perhaps, in a gradual softening down of Jewish prejudices, until, with many it ended in an absolute preference to the land of exile over the land of their fathers and their native homes. It is probable that the Jews were the more induced to look favorably upon these gentle customs and opinions, because of the comparatively mild treatment they received, and the greater purity of the Babylonian religion above the superstitions of the people with whom they had hitherto come in contact. It is quite certain at least, that they did not return from the captivity with unaltered sentiments; that they had in many things departed from the peculiarities of elder times. If we look too, at the further history of this people, after the rebuilding of the city and temple, till the time of Antiochus Epiphanes (B. C. 175,) including a period of about three hundred years — we find them placed among such influences as must have wrought very essential changes in the national character. During much of this long interval, Judea furnished a battle-ground for the contending armies of Alexander's successors; and as a frequent theatre of war, we may well imagine the distresses and vexations to which its inhabitants must have been exposed — and

the wearing away of the external power and national spirit of the Jews, by the frequent change of masters and constant dealings with foreigners.—It would not be to our purpose to take up the particulars of these events; and we have noticed them thus generally, only with a view to point out those circumstances in history, which led to the formation of the later and more degenerate period of Jewish literature. And it belongs to this end to notice, further, (as an agent in the change thus brought about) the influence of *Grecian* intercourse. Some causes seem to have concurred in making this influence particularly powerful at this time. The Jews had already taken one step toward removing their prejudice against foreign dogmas, by giving a favorable ear to the Chaldean philosophy—under the first Ptolemy (B.C. 320) many of them had been carried to Alexandria, a celebrated seat of Greek learning—and it was not long after the return from the Captivity, that the literature of the Greeks was in its most flourishing period. Most of all, the Platonic* philosophy, which arose about this time, engaged the especial attention of the learned among the Jews, and in particular of the Jews at Alexandria, where they were collected in considerable numbers, partly carried away (as before noticed) by Ptolemy Lagus and partly induced to go there by the many privileges and immunities which were granted them. There was then prevalent in that city a philosophy made up chiefly of the doctrines of Pythagoras and Plato, with an intermixture of the Egyptian and Oriental systems. Now besides this latter circumstance (as what they had become acquainted with at Babylon) recommended the Alexandrian

* Plato died B. C. 348.

Philosophy to the Jews, there was still more attraction in the sublime character of the Platonic doctrines—so nearly resembling the great truths revealed to their fathers, that the Jews did not hesitate to pronounce these heathen sages but borrowers from their own more ancient records. Here then was ample field for Jewish pride to range—that they should have given birth to that philosophy, which was now the study and admiration of the world. And having settled this with themselves, the great discrepancies between some of the Mosaic, and the Pythagorico-Platonic, dogmas, were easily smoothed down by the accommodating method of *allegory*, then in great repute at Alexandria; * and, “from that time the custom prevailed of dressing up the priests of the Mosaic Law in a Platonic garb.”† “Henceforward,” says Eichhorn, “it became next to impossible for a Jew to give to any composition that impress of national character, which belongs to the old Hebrew writing.” His pen was now guided by the Grecian taste, and was made to record Grecian ideas, as variously combined with Oriental. Still, says the same author, the amalgamation was always after a Jewish fashion.

These later compositions of the Jews, here referred to, were, the very Apocryphal writings of which we were to speak—And we have looked at some of the results of a considerable period of Jewish history, in order to judge the better concerning the character of these writings. Various opinions are held as to the precise *time* when they were composed; but perhaps there is good reason to believe that the earliest of them should not be dated farther back

* Our authority is, Brucker's Hist. Crit. Phil. tom. 2. p. 693.

† Ibid.

than two centuries before Christ. Why, it may now be asked, were these books excluded from the Jewish Canon? — by whom were they excluded? — and when was this Canon determined? These questions, so far as they belong to our subject, may be answered after we have spoken of.

3. The *authors and language* of the Apocryphal collection. Without examining each particular book of this collection — for it was our design to give only a general introduction — we may remark that most of them seem to have been written by Hellenistic Jews,* and in the Greek language. The two exceptions to both these remarks are, the first book of Maccabees, and Ecclesiasticus, which appear to be the works of Palestine Jews and originally written in Hebrew; but the originals are now lost. All of them are extant in the Greek translation of the Old Testament, called the Septuagint,† except the 2d book of Esdras and the short piece entitled the “Prayer of Manasseh,” — which are found in the Latin Vulgate.

4. These facts may throw some light on the interesting question, relating to the distinction made between these writings and the Canonical books. For with a Jew of Palestine it was an indispensable condition to receiving a book as of divine authority, that it should be written in the Holy Land, and in the sacred tongue. It was thought the Holy Spirit could not dictate divine truth in other tongues and among other people. Hence the Jewish abhorrence of the Greek translation before

* A Hellenistic Jew was one who lived out of Palestine.

† Made about 280 B. C. and so called from the supposed number of *seventy* translators engaged upon it.

mentioned ; which was so great, that they even made the time of its being finished, an occasion of public lament. Hence one reason at least for their rejecting from the Canon the writings in question. And this might be reason sufficient, except that it fails to account for the exclusion of the first of Maccabees and Ecclesiasticus. It is reasonable to suppose, then, that the Jewish Canon was concluded before these two were composed. And such is the common history of the matter. Soon after the return from the captivity, Ezra is believed to have collected and arranged the Jewish scriptures, making a careful comparison of the copies which he was able to find. "This," says Prideaux, "both Christians and Jews give him the honor of." "It is most likely," the same writer tells us, "that the two books of Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah and Esther, as well as Malachi, were afterwards added in the time of Simon the Just," — a celebrated Jew who lived in the early part of the third century before Christ — "and that it was not till then that the Jewish Canon was completed." Eichhorn gives very plausible reasons why and at what time it was thought necessary to settle the Canon. As somewhere before the time of Antiochus Epiphanes, (B. C. 175,) the Greek language and literature were becoming vernacular in Palestine, it seemed a seasonable occasion to fix the number of books which should belong to the sacred national collection, in order to prevent the admission of any work not written in the sacred tongue. Henceforward, therefore, the Jewish literature was divided into two ranks — canonical and apochryphal ; and the latter was not held in equal estimation with the former. That such a distinction existed

in our Saviour's time, appears abundantly from the testimony of two contemporary Jewish writers, viz.: Philo, an Alexandrian Jew, and Josephus, the celebrated Jewish historian. The latter, after naming, according to their divisions, the books "which are justly believed to be divine," mentions certain others written since their time, and expressly says of them, that they have "not been esteemed of the like authority by our forefathers, because there hath not been an exact succession of prophets since that time." Philo does, indeed, nowhere give any catalogue of the received books of Scripture, but from a comparison of the manner in which he quotes the canonical and apocryphal writings, and the use which he makes of them, it is reasonable to conclude that he did not put the same value on the one class as on the other. Examinations like these have led the learned German critic before quoted, to declare it "undeniable that at the time of Christ and the Apostles, the Canon of the Jews corresponded in extent with our present editions of the Bible."

The foregoing observations upon the Canon seemed to form a necessary part in an account of the Apocrypha, since they give an answer to the question, what *authority* has been or should be attached to this collection. And it is manifest from the view, here taken, that whatever opinion is held respecting the inspiration of the *elder* Jewish writings, — the Old Testament — these can lay claim to no such authority. Hence they cannot be appealed to, in support of any system of faith or practice. Yet though without any pretensions to a divine origin, they are not unworthy of regard on account of

5. The *uses* which may be drawn from them. These of course vary exceedingly, according to the very different character of the several books in this collection. We may properly enough distinguish the circumstances wherein they are useful, if we look at them first, as *historical* sources. It is not meant by this that they are of much value as authentic records of facts in historical order. For though as many as nine of them seem to be professed histories, yet much the larger part of this number, are generally accounted fabulous. The first book of Maccabees, however, is pronounced by some to be "a most valuable historical document, written with great accuracy and fidelity, on which more reliance may be placed, than on the writings of Josephus, who has borrowed his materials from it, and has frequently mistaken its meaning."* The second book is of much less value than the first — as containing some spurious passages, historical errors, &c. There is one peculiarity in both these books, which gives them an advantage over the other historical works of the Jews, viz: the reference which they make to some fixed era — and this, the era of the Seleucidæ†. But, as before said, these Apocryphal writings are not of so much value for their records of historical facts. They are rather to be prized for the indirect intelligence which they furnish. It cannot be

* Horne's Introduction, Vol. IV. p. 219.

† The era of the Seleucidæ — otherwise called the era of *contracts*, because they were dated from this — commences with October, 312 (B. C.) The Babylonians however fixed the era in the spring of 311. And the first book of Maccabees computes by this last, while the second book uses the former era. See Jahn's Hist. of the Hebrew Commonwealth, p. 212.

uninteresting, for one who has followed up the Jewish history from the earliest time, and marked the changes which were wrought in this singular people — to know something of their character as they were now living in the dawn of a brighter dispensation. A curious observer would fain hear what preceded the rising of the Sun of Righteousness — whether there was a gradual illumination before his coming, and what signs of preparation made it to be the “fulness of time.” And this reasonable curiosity is partly gratified by the writings before us, which throw much light upon the intellectual improvement of the Jews, their literature, religious opinions, manners, &c. in the period before the birth of Christ.

Some of them moreover, answer a second use, as the compositions of wise and pious men. This remark is chiefly applicable to the two books entitled “Ecclesiasticus,” and the “Wisdom of Solomon.” These were so highly estimated in the fourth century after Christ, that the council of Carthage held in that period, reckoned them to be the fourth and fifth books of Solomon. Though internal evidence declares against this, there can be no doubt of their value as treasures of moral apothegms, of counsels for common life, of exhortations to the fear of God, and the culture of *wisdom*; a word, “which in the Hebrew language, (so devoid of philosophic accuracy) served to express a host of ideas that are wont to be distinguished in the languages of other nations, richer in terms of philosophy,” as foresight, prudence, knowledge, understanding, science and art; virtue, truth, religion and morality. Though there is good reason to deny these to be productions of Solomon, yet from the

near resemblance of Ecclesiasticus to the book of Proverbs, it is scarcely to be accounted inferior in respect of contents, though the son of Sirach often gives his work a more diffuse style than his elder pattern. His theology is much the same with that of Moses and the prophets, and his morality, though not always built up on a firm basis, and frequently appealing to worldly motives, is nevertheless in general worthy of high commendation.

A third very important use to be made of the Apocrypha, (and the last we shall name) is, the aid which they afford in the illustration and explanation of the New Testament. Such an assistance were of course to be expected from writers who lived so near the time of Christ, and therefore must have used language in a similar manner to that, in which it is used by the writers of the New Testament. Passing over, however, any particulars concerning this point, it may be worth while to dwell upon some instances of the aid which they furnish in illustration of the *sentiments* expressed by the Evangelists. Compare for this purpose, "Wisdom of Solomon," v. 16—20, with Ephesians, vi. 14—17; also beginning of ch. xiii., with part of the first chapter of Romans. To confine ourselves to a particular portion only of the Apocrypha, viz.: Ecclesiasticus; let us see what helps may be drawn from this single book to illustrate the Gospel of Matthew.* To see what the Jews thought of the excellency of their nation as referred to in Matt. iii. 9, compare Eccl. xxxiii. 12—15; compare Matt. iii. 11, with Eccl. xlv. 19. That the word *poor* in Matt. v. 3, means sometimes *wretched*, af-

* We quote from Bretschneider's 2d "Excursus" to his commentary on Ecclesiasticus. Ratisbon: 1806.

flicted, see Eccl. xxxvii. 19. The son of Sirach in vii. 14, gives similar direction to what we find in Matt. vi. 7. The meaning of "hallowed," or sanctified, in Matt. vi. 9, is explained from Eccl. xxxvi. 4,—Matt. vi. 14 comp. with Eccl. xxviii. 2—4,—Matt. vii. 13, Sirach uses the same figure ch. xxi. 10, and xxxii. 21.—Matt. ix. 2. That the expression, "thy sins be forgiven thee," meant "the *punishment* of thy sins (i. e. disease,) is removed," appears from Eccl. xviii. 21, and xxiii. 11, and from ii. 11, where the very phrase is used. This way of speaking resulted from the opinion which was entertained among the Jews, that all misfortunes and especially diseases, were the punishment of sins; compare John ix. 1—3. Observe the similarity of sentiment in Matt. xii. 33, 34 and Eccl. xxvii. 6. That "idle" or unprofitable (Matt. xii. 36) may mean *impious*, see Eccl. xvi. 1 : x. 4. Matt. xvi. 13. By the "signs of the times" in this passage, are meant those miracles which were to mark the time of the Messiah. The words of the original are used in the same sense in Eccl. xxxvi. 6—8; Matt. xvii. 10, 11. (comp. Mark ix. 11.) That it was the opinion of the Jews, that Elias should precede the Messiah, see Eccl. xlviii. 10; Matt. xviii. 33; Eccl. xxviii. 4. Observe the same figure used in Matt. xix. 21, and Eccl. xxix. 11. Matt. xx. 15, some light is thrown on the meaning of *good* and *evil eye* by comparing Eccl. xxxv. 8—10, and xiv. 5—10.—Matt. xx. 28. Jesus might here the more easily represent himself to the Jews as the ransom for the world, since they were accustomed to consider pious men as a ransom for others, as we learn from Eccl. xlv. 17. Compare Matt. xxviii. 3 with Eccl. xlv. 2.

WM. SILSBEE.

THE FIRST COUNCIL OF THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH.

The Council which was held at Jerusalem by the Apostles and elders of the first Christian Church, was an important event in the progress of our religion. There are several circumstances which render its history interesting to us. Whatever may have been the abuses which in subsequent times have grown out of the frequent convocation of councils, when the decision depended more upon the inequality of numbers composing either party, than in the soundness of the views, and where the written decree too often sought and obtained support by compulsory measures, we hope to make it appear from a brief survey of the object and result of the Apostolic assembly that both were worthy and beneficial. The council was convened for the purpose of deciding upon what terms Gentile believers might be admitted to the privileges of the Christian Church. The circumstances which render it particularly interesting to us, are these. It was called for by disputes which at the time were considered of the highest importance to the extension, the purity, and perhaps to the existence of the Christian Church; disputes which ranked even the Apostles themselves in different parties. It is interesting, as it assembled together for the discussion, all those to whom the interests of Christianity were confided, and more than all for the decision which it proclaimed, so satisfactory and harmonious to all parties—settling the temporary disagreement of Peter and Paul, and teaching a lesson of charity, surpassed hardly by the words of our Saviour. This history is given in Acts xv. and its decision is re-

ferred to by St. Paul in Galatians ii. St Paul soon after his conversion had passed three years in Arabia, and on his return had preached and sojourned at Damascus, Cæsarea, Tarsus, Paphos, Perga in Pamphylia, Antioch in Pisidia, Salamis, Illyricum, and Cilicia. It was at Antioch, the chief city in Pisidia, that the circumstances which called forth the council at Jerusalem seem to have arisen. Paul had entered into the synagogue in that place, on the Sabbath, (Acts xiii. 14.) and after the usual reading of the law, at the request of the rulers, he exhorted the people. His language was bold and fearless, but he was permitted to depart unharmed. The Gentiles desired that the word he had then preached to the Jews, might be preached to them on the next Sabbath, when we are told (44) "that almost the whole city came together to hear the word of God." The Jews, envious that the Gentiles should share the privileges which they thought exclusively their own, excited a tumult against Paul. But he confiding in his own individual authority, as chosen to be an Apostle by peculiar manifestations of the will of God concerning him, answers the tumultuous Jews, that as it was meet that the Gospel should have been preached first to them, he had done so, but as they would not hear him, he should turn unto the Gentiles. He refers to Isaiah xlix. 6, for his authority. The Gentiles were glad and received the word willingly, but the Jews raised such a disturbance as to force Paul and Barnabas to flee into Iconium. After passing twice through this and other Lycaonian cities, they returned again to Pisidia, thence after passing through Perga and Attalia in Pamphylia, they sailed round to Antioch in Syria, (xiv. 26.) where they had

first been ordained to the ministry, (xiii. 1.) Here, we are told, they remained a long time, rehearsing all that God had done with them, and how he had opened the door of faith unto the Gentiles. (xiv. 27, 28.) This city was the first field of the controversy. The Gospel had as yet been preached for the most part to the Jews, though many Gentiles who had previously embraced Judaism, and some who had not done so, had been converted by Peter and Paul. It was a question of great importance with the Jewish converts, whether their fellow believers among the Gentiles should be admitted to all the Christian privileges, without submitting themselves to the right of circumcision, and conforming on other points to the Mosaic ritual. The Jewish believers in this respect may be comprehended under three classes. First—those who considered a conformity to the ritual on the part of the Gentile converts, as necessary to their salvation. It was these, who “taught the brethren, except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved.” (xv. 1.) The second class comprehended those, who taught that faith in Christ and obedience to his precepts, was sufficient for the salvation of the Gentiles, but considered the Law as obligatory upon themselves and their posterity, as the distinct people to whom it had been delivered, and though they did not enforce it upon the Gentiles, they looked for their acceptance of it for reasons of respect and gratitude. These could not but entertain conscientious scruples about certain meats and drinks, and the propriety of free converse with those who did not observe such distinctions. The third class was composed of those who considered the Mosaic law with all its peculiarities to

be abolished; they would partake freely of all kinds of meat, and converse freely with all those who used a like liberty. Now it could not but happen that such a diversity of opinion, upon points too regarded by some of the highest sanctity, would lead to ill feeling and dispute. The Jew whose partial faith in Jesus had not as yet driven from his brow or from his heart that almost unconquerable pride of being one of the peculiar people of God, would look with coldness, upon the equally self-satisfied Gentile, who could not but rejoice at the easy terms which had brought him to a level with those whom he had so long despised. Often must the apostle have had cause to exhort the one party—"To bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please themselves." (Rom. xv. 1.) and as often to encourage others, "to stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ had made them free." (Gal. v. 1.) Some respect was certainly due to the Jewish nation, but those who were rigid in enforcing a compliance with their ritual as necessary to salvation, "deserved to be blamed." And on the other hand, the attachment of the Gentiles to the faith which they had embraced, was not to be weakened by a burdensome infliction of those institutions, which, partially enlightened as they were, they could not but see were unnecessary to the full discharge of their new obligations. Thus matters stood, when the controversy was about to be settled in a manner satisfactory to all parties. Paul and Barnabas as we before said, were preaching at Antioch in Syria, when as we are told by St Luke, certain men came down from Judea to enforce upon the Gentile converts the necessity of the most rigid compliance with the Mosaic ritual as necessary to their salvation. The Apostles

justly fearing the effect of such a doctrine, disputed its validity, when the only way of settling the dispute, was to send "Paul and Barnabas and certain others of them to Jerusalem unto the Apostles and elders about this question." While on their way to Jerusalem, they continued to declare in the villages of Phenicia and Samaria through which they passed, the conversion of the Gentiles.

Behold them now in the fiftieth year of the Christian era, assembled at Jerusalem with the apostles and elders to discuss the great question. Paul and Barnabas first made known their wonderful success, and though they were, in the words of the decree, "men who had hazarded their lives for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ," they still survived to declare "all the things that God had done with them." They were answered by certain rigid Pharisees of their number and faith, that circumcision, and obedience to the law of Moses was necessary. The question being thus fairly proposed, Peter,—who by the sublime vision recorded in Acts x., had been instructed that nothing which God had made was common or unclean; that He was no respecter of persons, and that in every nation there were those whom God would accept and approve,—calls to the minds of the assembly the nature of the mission to which he had been especially appointed. God, he says, knew the hearts of all, and gave to them all the same assurance of his favor. The same faith which purifies the heart of a Jew, purifies also the heart of the Gentile. Why would they tempt God in putting upon the Gentiles, a yoke so heavy, that neither they nor their fathers had been able to bear it? The favors of God conferred through Christ, are to be the means alike of their salvation and of ours. We all

believe in order to be saved, and the same belief will save them. The multitude listen in silence while Paul and Barnabas declare how the hand of God has been with them likewise while among the Gentiles. When they had been heard, James gives a clear and connected summary of the discourses. He brings before their attention two decisive points: — First, the declared purpose of God that the Gentiles should be at some period enlightened; and second, the acknowledged fact that God had indeed been with those who had labored among them. He tells them that the conversion of the Gentiles was nothing new, as it had been declared as early as the prophet Amos, (ix. 11, 12) (see also Isaiah lx. 3) and Simeon [Simon Peter] had borne witness to its fulfilment. James then offers his advice, which is, that the Gentiles which have turned to their faith, should not be burdened with the imposition of the Mosaic ritual, but that a letter should be sent to them with authority advising their obedience to four plain and easy requisitions, as follows: "That ye abstain from meats offered to idols, and from blood, and from things strangled, and from fornication." (Acts. xv. 29.)

Let us dwell a little upon this decree. It seems evident that this was not designed for the moral code of the Gentile converts, or even a summary of the Christian duties. Dr Lardner has argued very satisfactorily, against the supposition that this epistle was concerned about things of a moral nature. He says, there was not a Gentile convert who did not know his duty in all those respects. There never was a question whether Gentile believers should obey the precepts of righteousness and holiness. The dispute was about ritual ordinances; about things in their nature

indifferent. If it had been the design of the assembly to remind the converts of their duties and obligations as Christians, they would most certainly have enjoined a perseverance in faith in Christ, of patience and fortitude under afflictions and persecutions. Let us see if his opinion is not conformable with a strict interpretation of the four requisitions of the Apostolic epistle.

1. "That ye abstain *from meats offered to idols*," or, in the words of James, "from pollutions of idols." That this was a duty of great importance, we discern from the stress laid upon it in many of the epistles, particularly in the whole of I Corin. viii. and in xiv. 23, Rom. xiv. Those whom Paul addressed, knew indeed, "that an idol was nothing," and consequently that there was no real uncleanness in the meats which had usually been consecrated to it. But as Paul warned them, every man has not that knowledge, and that some who were conscious of thinking an idol to be a real deity, and still partook of the meats sacrificed to him as if sacrificed to a real deity, were guilty of sin. This then was the reason of his injunction; he would not have them lay a stumbling block in the way of their weaker brethren, and would propose for their imitation the self-denial which he himself practised. "If meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no flesh while the world standeth, lest I make my brother to offend." This advice to the new converts was evidently of a local and temporary application, and designed to further the progress of charity, and mutual forbearance and watchfulness, in regard to the bigoted or weak minded converts. The fulfilment of the words of Zephaniah ii. 11, has rendered it obsolete.

2. "*And from blood.*" By this is generally understood a prohibition to use in any manner, the blood of brute animals. The reason assigned in the Mosaic law, is, that blood was designed for an atonement upon the altar. (Lev. xvii. 11.)

3. "*And from things strangled,*" i. e., from the flesh of animals, which had been put to death by strangulation, and thus not having been cleansed properly of their blood, coming under the same ground of prohibition with the preceding injunction. As the first of the three commands which we have mentioned, was designed to teach the Jewish believers to regard the weak consciences of those converted from idolatry, so the two latter were intended for a compromise on the part of the Gentile converts, with the deep-rooted prejudices of the Jewish disciples. These are likewise of local and temporary application. As there are none now who would take offence at the neglect of the prohibitions, we may be guided by our own choice. A sufficient reason for the Mosaic command upon these points, is found in that assigned in the law, and in the necessity of some strict rules by which the Jews might be separated in their whole mode of life from other people. Maimonides, the Jewish commentator, founds the ritual prohibition upon the disagreeable and unhealthy nature of the blood and fat of beasts, being, as he says, too strong and too heavy for food.

4. "*And from fornication.*" Commentators have differed upon the bearing and force of this prohibition. If those reasons are satisfactory which we have before assigned in support of the opinion that the Apostolic decree had no reference to duties of morality, then we

must look for some other meaning for "fornication," than that usually intended by it. Bishop Pearce thinks that James had especial reference here to this vice as growing out of the idolatrous sacrifices of the heathen : it being frequently and notoriously practised about their temples. Kenrick, Schleusner, Selden and Beza, suppose it to be used in its figurative sense, not infrequent in the Old and New Testaments, for idolatry or some mark of idolatry. But as it seems most reasonable to interpret this injunction according to the spirit of the whole decree, the interpretation maintained by Theodoret and followed by Lardner, recommends itself. According to them, the word "fornication," relates to marriages with the heathen, "which, though not absolutely unlawful, had better be avoided by Christians, lest they should prove dangerous temptations to apostasy. As in Heb. xii. 16, 'Lest there be any fornicator, or profane person, as Esau, who for one morsel of meat sold his birthright.'" "I suppose," says Lardner, "that both these characters are given of Esau. He was not a lewd profligate or fornicator, in our sense of the word; but he married Canaanitish women." Gen. xxvi. 34, 35. The Jews were forbidden to marry with idolaters, and St Paul, 1 Cor. vii., *advises* Christians to the same effect. It was a matter of expediency and prudence, especially in that age of the Church, to avoid it. This interpretation is so in accordance with the rest of the decree, that we may safely decide upon its acceptance.

Such was the simple and reasonable advice of the Apostolic assembly at Jerusalem, to the disciples of Cilicia, Syria and Antioch, and with them, to all the Christian converts. Who will not pronounce it to be

wise? Suited to the state of the times and of the Christian Church. It was decided to impose "no greater burden than these necessary things." They are called "necessary things," and so they were;—necessary, for the growth and extension of the Church;—necessary—for its purity, but above all, for the existence of harmony among its members, and for the mutual extension of that charity for each other's prejudices and weaknesses. St Luke says, there was some disputing in the assembly. This, indeed, was what we should have expected, while some were anxious to impose the more important requisitions of the Law, upon the stiff-necked and weak minded Gentiles, the other party, in their eagerness for the new religion, may have been hasty in undervaluing the old. However, the result of the meeting was harmonious. The decree "pleased the Apostles and the elders, and the whole Church." It seemed reasonable to allow the force of the reason suggested by James; that as the Law of Moses was read in the synagogue every Sabbath day, and listened to both by Jewish and Gentile converts, the easy, yet in the view of some of them, very important requisitions, so often repeated, should not be violated wantonly.

At the breaking up of the meeting, Paul and Barnabas, with others of their number were despatched by the assembly to Antioch, where the decree was read to the gathered multitude, who were highly gratified with its contents. But the mutual harmony promised by the terms of the epistle, subsequently met with a temporary interruption. Paul and Barnabas, after preaching a while at Antioch, determined to visit the cities where they had formerly made converts; but before their departure they met with

Peter and his companion Mark, with whom they seem to have had a moment's misunderstanding. Peter, from motives which we shall explain, had taken sides with the Judaising Christians; i. e. those converted Jews who considered a conformity to the ritual observances on the part of the believing Gentiles, as necessary or proper. His motive indeed was good, but as it was rather short sighted in the opinion of Paul, it was deemed by him "worthy of blame." No one will doubt that Peter was really aware of the absolute indifference of conformity or non-conformity with ritual observances. Indeed, he himself had often strongly asserted it. He had received the Gentile Cornelius and his company into the Church at Cesarea. (Acts x.) When he returned to Jerusalem, he contended against those who would enforce the necessity of circumcision, and had eaten freely with those who neglected it. (Acts xi.) He had likewise spoken with great boldness in the council of the burdensome inflictions of the Law. It was not then for ignorance or obstinacy upon this point that St Paul censures him. When St Peter came to Antioch, he met there a large number of those who maintained the authority of the Law. Actuated entirely with the hope of pleasing them, and with a desire of avoiding another controversy similar to that which he had had at Jerusalem with "them of the circumcision," he would have complied with their feelings. There can be no question that in certain circumstances and places, the course of Peter would have been a right one. Paul himself, evidently thought it reasonable that those who were Jews by birth should if they pleased conform to the Law, "unto the Jews he became as a Jew." (1 Cor. xi. 20.) He seems never to have forsaken the rites

of his fathers, and often called himself "a Jew of Tarsus." When in the neighborhood of the temple, in compliance with the expressed wishes of thousands of the Jews who believed there, but were all zealous of the law, (Acts xxi. 20. 26.) he took upon him the vow of purification and abstinence. St Peter was actuated by similar motives at Antioch. The reasons of his conduct must then have seemed weighty, as even Barnabas was influenced by them. (Gal. ii. 13.) Peter had allowed himself free converse with the Gentiles, but when some zealous Jews came with James, he ceased to eat with them, and would have persuaded them to be circumcised. St Paul perceived that he was not keeping the plain path of freedom and the true requisitions of the Gospel, and asked Peter in the presence of all, this plain question: If you, being by birth a Jew, use your lawful privileges as a disciple of the new religion, to neglect so many of the Jewish rites and live as do the Gentiles, why would you compel the Gentiles, with equal Gospel privileges in their possession, to conform themselves to the Jewish rites? We, who by birth are subjects of the Law, know very well that a mere outward performance of rites, is not the saving doctrine of Christianity. Since Christ hath enlightened us, we know that God's favor which once depended upon the works of the law, is now to be found in faith in Christ; we have adopted this faith, and embraced the Gospel, in order that we may obtain the same privileges (viz. justification) by it, as were formerly granted to the works of the law, but which are granted no longer. (Gal. ii. 14. 16.) Such was the reasoning of Paul. The dispute was settled, and all parties were satisfied. The disagreement between the Apostles was settled,

and in his after epistles St Paul makes the most honorable mention of Peter and Barnabas. The terms upon which the Gentiles should be allowed free communion with their Jewish brethren were reasonably and amicably admitted. "And as they went through the cities, they delivered the decrees for to keep, that were ordained by the Apostles and elders which were at Jerusalem. And so were the Churches established in the faith, and increased in numbers daily." (Acts, xxi. 4, 5.)

G. E. ELLIS.

THE VARIOUS READINGS IN THE ORIGINAL TEXT OF THE
NEW TESTAMENT.

[The origin and nature of the various readings in the original text of the New Testament, and the means which have been used for selecting from them the true one, form a very interesting subject of inquiry. As it is one of the objects of this work to furnish information upon such subjects, the following translations from Michaelis' Introduction to the New Testament must be interesting to the reader.]

THE AUTOGRAPHA, OR ORIGINAL MANUSCRIPTS OF THE
NEW TESTAMENT ARE LOST.

Autographa, or original manuscripts of the New Testament, are the first copies of each book, which were written either by the Apostles themselves, or by amanuenses under their immediate inspection. The latter mode was usually adopted by St Paul, but to avoid the

circulation of spurious epistles, he wrote the concluding benediction with his own hand.*

None of these original manuscripts are now remaining, nor could their preservation be expected, without the interposition of a miracle, during the space of eighteen centuries. Were they now extant, they would greatly exceed in antiquity the oldest manuscripts that are known, in which a thousand years are considered as a very great age, and none perhaps can be produced, that were written prior to the sixth century. The pretended original of St Mark's Gospel at Venice is known to be nothing more than a copy of the Latin version, and, considering the dampness of the place, in which it is kept, the circumstance of its preservation, were it as ancient as many have supposed, would be still more miraculous than the work itself.

But what benefit should we derive from the possession of these manuscripts, or what inconvenience do we sustain from their loss? No critic in classical literature inquires after the original of a profane author, or doubts of the authenticity of Cicero's Offices, because the copy is no longer extant, which Cicero wrote with his own hand. An antiquarian, or collector of ancient records, will hardly maintain that the probability of these books being genuine is inferior to the probability that a record in his possession of the twelfth century is an authentic document of that period: for though his record is only six hundred years old, and the works of Cicero are thrice as ancient, we are more exposed to imposition in the

* See Rom. xvi. 22. Gal. vi. 11. and 2 Thess. iii. 17, 18, compared with Ch. ii. 2. 2 Cor. xvi. 21.

former instance, as the forgery of antiquities is often practised by those, whose business and profit is to lead the curious into error. But supposing that the original manuscripts of Cicero, Cæsar, Paul, and Peter were now extant, it would be impossible to decide whether they were spurious, or whether they were actually written by the hands of these authors. The case is different with respect to persons, who have lived in the two last centuries, whose hand-writing is known, with which a copy in question may be compared and determined; but we have no criterion, that can be applied to manuscripts so old as the Christian era. Yet admitting that these original writings were extant, that we had positive proofs of their authenticity, and, what is still more, that the long period of eighteen centuries had left the color of the letters unfaded, still they would be no infallible guide in regard to the various readings. Mistakes of writing are frequently found in the copy which proceeds from an author himself; in the publication of various works I have discovered, from revising the printed sheet, errors in the supposed correct manuscript that was sent to the printer, and the same inaccuracies might have happened to the copyist employed by St Paul. The late Reiske has shewn with very convincing arguments that the copy of Abulfeda's Geography, in the university library at Leyden, is written with Abulfeda's own hand, yet in some cases we justly prefer the reading of other manuscripts, where the author seems to have committed an error, which was afterwards corrected in the publication of the work. But as the letters of the autographa must have been rendered illegible by length of time, they would afford no critical assistance in deciding on doubtful readings.

It has been justly remarked, that the original of St Paul's Epistles to the Romans could not have been extant in the middle of the second century ; for Marcion, who made so many alterations in the text of the New Testament, came himself to Rome, where an appeal to the original, had it then existed, must have exposed him to public shame, wherever his alterations were unwarranted, and have confirmed those which were well grounded ; but as the History of the Church is silent upon this subject, it is reasonable to suppose that no such comparison either was or could be made.

The early loss of the Autographa of the New Testament affords just matter of surprise, when we reflect that the original manuscripts of Luther, and other eminent men who lived at the time of the Reformation, whose writings are of much less importance than those of the Apostles, are still subsisting. Various causes may have contributed to this extraordinary circumstance, of which several have been alleged in Griesbach's History of the text of Paul's epistles, sect. ii. § 7, 8. My sentiments upon this subject are as follows.

The original manuscripts, that are now extant, are chiefly of such works, as have never been published ; but when a book is made known to the public, the handwriting of the author ceases to be of value, and dwindles into oblivion. The edition itself supplies the place of the author's copy, which a printer thinks it useless to preserve, when the publication is finished. In the same manner the several books of the New Testament circulated among the Christians in numerous copies : these were soon collected into a volume, and formed the edition in general use ; and as no disputes had then arisen

on the subject of various readings, they felt not the necessity of preserving in a common archive the manuscripts of the Apostles. The situation of the Christian churches was at that time extremely different from the present : the most eminent, which were those of Rome and Corinth, consisted of a number of small societies, that assembled separately in private houses, having no public building as a common receptacle for the whole community ; and even in those private houses a moderate number only could meet together, as it was their custom not merely to pray and to teach, but likewise to celebrate their feasts of love. The epistle, which they had received from St Paul, was not the property of any one society in particular, but belonged to the community at large, and that which was sent to the Corinthians was addressed to the communities throughout all Achaia. Each society copied the epistle in its turn, and beside the general copies, many individuals probably took copies for themselves, whence the original manuscript of the Apostle, in passing through so many hands, where perhaps not always the greatest care was taken, must unavoidably have suffered. The Christian communities at Rome and Corinth had no common archive, or public library, in which the manuscript of the Apostle might have been afterwards deposited, for want of which, the original, as soon as a sufficient number of copies had been made, was forgotten and lost. In other cities the number of single societies, among which the epistle was divided, was inferior indeed to that in Rome, Corinth, or Ephesus, but the same causes contributed in each to the loss of the original epistle.

The late or early loss of the Autographa has no in-

fluence on the grounds of our faith, for the credibility of a book, which during the life of the author has been made known to the world, depends not on the preservation of the author's manuscript. No reader of the present work will inquire after the copy, which I send to the printer, to determine whether the work itself be spurious or authentic ; nor was it necessary, for determining the authenticity of the New Testament, to preserve the originals, for each book, during the lives of the Apostles, was circulated throughout the Christian world in numberless copies, though they were not collected during that period into a single volume.

WHETHER THE EARLY LOSS OF THE AUTOGRAPHA HAS OCCASIONED MISTAKES IN ALL THE SUBSEQUENT COPIES. TWO-FOLD EDITION OF THE BOOKS OF THE NEW TESTAMENT, ONE BEFORE, THE OTHER AFTER THE DEATH OF THE APOSTLES.

As the Autographa of the New Testament fell so early into oblivion, it is natural to inquire, whether the true reading of certain passages be not entirely lost, and without any trace, either in the oldest manuscript, or in the most ancient version. This question, delivered in other terms, amounts to nothing more than, whether it be not allowable, in certain cases, to make use of critical conjecture in the New Testament, as well as in other books. We take this liberty with writers in general, and correct, sometimes, the very manuscript, which an author had written with his own hand, who, as well as a copyist, is exposed to the danger of writing wrong.

The oldest manuscripts of the New Testament were made many centuries after the loss of the originals; we must inquire therefore into the mode of publication adopted in the first age of Christianity, with respect to those writings which compose at present the New Testament. No certain historical evidence can be produced on this subject, our accounts of the primitive church, like those of all societies and nations in their state of infancy, being imperfect and obscure. But no doubt can be entertained that the several parts of the New Testament underwent originally a two-fold publication; and the answer to our present inquiry must be determined by deciding which of those publications formed the basis of those manuscripts which are now extant.

1. The first publication consisted in the distribution of the single parts of the New Testament, as well epistles as Gospels, of which copies were taken not only for those communities to which they were immediately addressed, but likewise for the Christians, who were dispersed in different provinces. That this is true of the epistles of St Paul, appears from 2 Peter iii. 16, and it is probable that St Paul himself had copies taken of the thirteen epistles which are still extant, in order to distribute them in the Christian world, and even that he collected these epistles into a volume. If that be true which I shall attempt to demonstrate in the sequel, that St Paul wrote very many epistles, beside the thirteen which are found in the New Testament, it is inconceivable that no fragment, nor even the smallest trace of them, should any where be visible, if their publication had depended on the persons, to whom they were ad-

dressed.* For each community must have been partial to that epistle which they themselves had received, and as curiosity alone would have tempted numbers to purchase copies, if copies could have been procured, some fragments at least would have remained, in which we should discover the singular style of the Apostle. But as no such discovery has hitherto been made, it seems as if the right of publishing depended on the writer, and that a pretension to that privilege from other persons, during the life of the author, was considered as a breach of literary property. If the above argument be thought not absolutely conclusive, yet so much at least is certain that St Paul, took part in the publication of his thirteen epistles.

It seems highly probable, from 2 Thess. ii. 2. that so early as the year, in which St Paul wrote his second epistle to the Thessalonians, there circulated among the Christian communities other epistles than those, which the apostle had immediately addressed to them, some of which being spurious, he teaches in the third chapter verses 17, 18, how to distinguish them from the genuine. Now these spurious epistles could have hardly been written, to the Thessalonians themselves, as the imposture would have been too glaring and too easily detected. The mark of distinction to which St Paul refers is probably the concluding benediction, "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with you all, Amen," which in the genuine copies was written with the Apostle's own

* I speak not at present of the epistle to the Hebrews, which was either not written by St Paul or written in Hebrew and translated into Greek.

hand. If this be true, the Apostles must be considered as publishers of their own writings, but as the thought is new, I submit it to the consideration of the learned.

In these first editions of the single books of the New Testament, in the time of the Apostles and Evangelists, mistakes in writing were as unavoidable, as in modern ages mistakes in printing, as it lies beyond the reach of human abilities to produce what is absolutely perfect. It was impossible for St Paul, or any other Apostle to revise and correct all the copies which were taken of his writings; but as the errata of the different transcribers related to different passages, and it is hardly possible that all could have failed in the same manner, and in the same text, if we were still in possession of all the copies of this first edition, we might be certain that the true reading of every doubtful text of the New Testament might be discovered in some one of them, and with proper judgment be distinguished from the false. Griesbach, in his *History of the Text of Paul's Epistles*, sec. ii. § 14, is of opinion that the members of the Western Church continued during a longer period the use of the ancient copies of single epistles. Could this supposition be confirmed by historical evidence, the Western manuscripts would secure us from the apprehension of having lost the true reading of any passage, but it would render at the same time extremely dubious the right of critical conjecture.

II. After the death of all, or the greatest part of the Apostles, was formed that collection of writings which we call at present the New Testament. It contained at first not all the books, which we find in it at presen

the four catholic epistles, for instance, being wanting; and the copy which was used by the old Syriac translators had not the epistle to the Hebrews, for this epistle has all the appearance of having been translated by another hand, and in a later period. It is uncertain by whom the collection was made, perhaps by the elders of the church of Ephesus, but we can only conjecture, as we have no historical evidence. It was undoubtedly made after the death of most of the Apostles, and after the destruction of Jerusalem, as it contained the Gospel of St John, which was written after that event; whether that Apostle was still alive when the collection was made, is likewise uncertain, but it must have happened in the first century, as the old Syriac version was taken from it, and we have reason to suppose that this version was made before the first century had elapsed. Now, in forming this collection, it is not probable that the Autographa of the several books of the New Testament were sought among all the Christian communities dispersed throughout the Roman empire; the silence of history on this subject is a proof of the contrary, for the knowledge of so remarkable an event, as the forming a volume of the sacred writings, to which the Eastern and the Western churches contributed their assistance, would have been preserved at least by tradition. The most natural opinion is, that the collector of these writings acted in the same manner as the collector of every other set of writings, that he procured as fair and accurate a copy as possible of every book, and placed them together in a volume. Whatever mistakes were in these single copies, (and no copies can be supposed to be perfectly free from faults) were of course transferred

to all the transcripts which were made from this general collection. And as we have reason to suppose that all our manuscripts of the New Testament, as well as those from which the old versions were made, proceeded from this collection, it is possible that the true reading of several texts is absolutely lost, which we can restore only by the help of critical conjecture. I will conclude this section by remarking that some few of our various readings may possibly be corrections of the text of this collection, made after its publication, and founded on authority of more accurate transcripts of single books taken previous to that period.

VARIOUS READINGS, OF WHICH ONLY ONE CAN BE THE TRUE READING, WERE UNAVOIDABLE IN THE NEW TESTAMENT.

In a book of such antiquity, and so frequently transcribed as the New Testament, the admission of mistakes was unavoidable, which increasing with the multiplication of the copies, there arose a great variety of different readings. Whatever pains had been taken by the transcribers, unless they had been inspired as well as the Apostles, it was impossible to avoid making some few mistakes, such for instance as leaving out a line, when two lines following or end with the same word. Whoever doubts of the truth of this assertion, may make the trial by transcribing a few pages of the Greek Testament, and comparing his copy with the original. Or he may examine a printed sheet as it comes from the press, in which he will often find mistakes after the second and third correction. In an edition of the Bible, the press is sometimes corrected five times before

the work is printed off; yet in the very editions which are called *mirabiles*, as if absolutely perfect, we discover typographical errors. If Providence therefore watches not over those impressions of the New Testament, so as to produce a faultless copy, though printed with the greatest care, and revised with the utmost attention, it is in vain to expect a faultless manuscript.

It is possible that many mistakes in the first manuscript of a work, may be detected as manifest orthographical errors, such as *pulres* for *plures*, in the preface to Stephen's editio mirabilis of the New Testament, which deserves not the name of a various reading, because it is an evident erratum of the printer. But this is not always the case in a book of high antiquity and importance, where every syllable is regarded with the greatest veneration. Mistakes themselves admit sometimes an explanation, the repetition of them in subsequent copies increases their authority, and though art is often requisite to procure them the shadow of a meaning, we allow, on the credit of several manuscripts, a reading which if found only in one would be instantly rejected as an error of the copyist. An evident mistake in one transcript may be corrected in another, by the addition or subtraction of a letter or syllable, so as to give the expression a meaning different from the original, and in such cases what at first was orthographical error acquires the title of a various reading. These various readings are often difficult to be distinguished from mere mistakes; in many examples, what appears at first sight to be an error of the transcriber, is found on a more minute inquiry, to convey an adequate sense; and we discover sometimes in a word, that seems totally without meaning,

a remnant of the true original reading, in which one or more letters have, by time or accident, been erased. The difficulty of this distinction is particularly great in regard to the New Testament, which has not only been copied times unnumbered, but is considered as the fountain of knowledge by Christians of every denomination, whether orthodox, heterodox, or heretic, all of whom have contributed their share in altering and amending according to their respective principles.

It is useless to appeal to the care and attention of the early Christians in copying the New Testament; since with the best intentions they had not ability to effect, what lies not within the power of the best regulated press. But this boasted attention in every copyist is totally ungrounded, for they were often men of no knowledge, who wrote for hire. To appeal to the interposition of Providence, which could not as is supposed, allow the admission of errors, is a violation of common sense; it is to prescribe rules for the conduct of Providence, and from those rules to draw an unwarranted conclusion; it is to argue in the same manner, as if an historian in relating the account of a battle, should premise that Providence could not fail to give victory to the just party, and instead of abiding by real facts, determine from those premises the event of the action. In short, implies an impossibility, unless we assume a series of never-ceasing miracles; for no transcriber, when left to his own natural abilities, will ever produce a copy, that is perfectly similar in every letter to the original. This subject belongs, in some measure, to the principium indiscernibilium, from which we derive the maxim, Art cannot produce a perfect imitation.

The foregoing observations would have been entirely useless, had not many learned divines in the former part of this century been alarmed at the immense number of various readings in the New Testament, and maintained that we should at all events deny them, as inconsistent with divine inspiration. But as the editions of Mill and Wetstein contain so many examples of different readings, which cannot possibly be referred to the class of simple errata, it is useless to deny what lies open to the sight. This mode of thinking, with respect to the New Testament, seems therefore to have vanished; but as the same complaints have been renewed in later times, in regard to the various readings collected from the Old Testament, there is reason to apprehend that ignorance may raise the voice again in some future period, as in the age of Mill, whose work a pious but unlettered zeal condemned as impious. The late Bengel, whose truly devout and religious character was universally acknowledged, contributed in a great measure to introduce a more rational way of thinking, and the critical treatment which the New Testament received under his hands, removed gradually that anxiety and suspicions which the various readings had before excited:

WHETHER OUR FAITH IS AFFECTED BY THE VARIOUS
READINGS.

It is a very ungrounded fear, that the number of various readings, which either have been, or shall hereafter be collected from the New Testament may diminish the certainty of the Christian religion. Instead of being alarmed at their number we ought rather to exult, as

the probability of restoring the genuine text of an author increases with the increase of the copies, and the most inaccurate and mutilated editions of ancient writers are precisely those where the fewest manuscripts remain. As no copy can be perfect, and each has its peculiar errors, a want of various readings implies either a poverty of manuscripts, or that the copies which are extant are all taken from the same ancient manuscript, whose faults are of course transmitted to the subsequent transcripts, whether accidental or intended. No book is more exposed to the suspicions of wilful corruptions, than the New Testament, for the very reason that it is the fountain of divine knowledge; and if in all the manuscripts now extant we found a similarity in the reading we should have reason to suspect that the ruling party of the Christian church had endeavored to annihilate whatever was inconsistent with its own tenets. Whereas the different readings of the manuscripts in our possession afford sufficient proof that they were written independently of each other by persons separated by distance of time, remoteness of place, and diversity of opinions. They are not the works of a single faction, but of Christians of all denominations, whether dignified with the title of orthodox, or branded by the ruling church with the name of heretic; and though no single manuscript can be regarded as a perfect copy of the writings of the Apostles, yet the Truth lies scattered in them all, which it is the business of critics to select from the general mass.

A G E N T S .

MAINE.

Portland, Colman, Holden & Co.
Hallowell, C. Spaulding.
Belfast, P. & E. T. Morrill.
Bangor, J. Bright.
Eastport, H. S. Favor.

NEW HAMPSHIRE.

Portsmouth { J. F. Shores,
 { J. W. Foster,
Dover, Samuel C. Stevens.
Keene, G. Tilden.
Concord, Marsh, Capen & Lyon.

VERMONT.

Brattleboro', George H. Peck.
Burlington, C. Goodrich.

MASSACHUSETTS.

Cambridge, J. Munroe & Co.
Concord, John Stacy.
Salem, { Whipple & Law-
 { rence,
 { W. & S. B. Ives.
Lowell, R. Meacham.
Newburyport, T. B. White.
New Bedford, William Howe.
Taunton, Franklin Dunbar.
Worcester, C. Harris.
Plymouth, W. S. Bartlett.
Framingham, Rufus Brewer.
Waltham, J. Bond.
Walpole, Asa Whitman.
Springfield, Elisha Edwards.
Northampton, S. Butler & Son.
Hingham, C. & E. B. Gill.

RHODE ISLAND.

Providence, A. S. Beckwith.

CONNECTICUT.

Brooklyn, J. B. Whitcomb.

NEW YORK.

New York, C. S. Francis.
Trenton, Isaac B. Pierce.
Rochester, C. Morse.

PENNSYLVANIA.

Philadelphia, M. T. C. Gould.
Pittsburg, Johnson & Stockton.

MARYLAND.

Baltimore, W. R. Lucas.

DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA.

Washington, Thompson & Ho-
mans.

SOUTH CAROLINA.

Charleston, T. Cousins.

GEORGIA.

Augusta, T. S. Metcalf.

OHIO.

Cincinnati, E. H. Flint.
Zanesville, Peters and Pelham.

LOUISIANA.

New Orleans, M. Carroll.

ALABAMA;

Mobile, Sidney Smith.

THE SCRIPTURAL INTERPRETER is devoted to the explanation of the language of Scripture. Each No. contains 48 pages 12 mo. 6 Nos. or 288 pages, make a volume. The subscription price is \$1 a volume, payable in advance.